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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS IRAQ-KUWAIT OBSERVATION MISSION

(1 October 1995-31 March 1996)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report on the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) covers developments since my report of 2 October 1995 (S/1995/836) and gives an account of the activities of UNIKOM in pursuance of the mandate entrusted to it by the Security Council in resolutions 687 (1991), 689 (1991) and 806 (1993).

II. ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS IRAQ-KUWAIT OBSERVATION MISSION AND THE SITUATION IN THE DEMILITARIZED ZONE

2. During the period under review, the situation in the demilitarized zone (DMZ) was generally calm. UNIKOM received nine formal complaints: three from Iraq and six from Kuwait. Of these, UNIKOM was able to confirm one complaint from Iraq, concerning overflights of the DMZ by military aircraft on 14 and 18 December 1995, although their nationality could not be determined. UNIKOM also confirmed one complaint from Kuwait, concerning two Iraqi border policemen who had crossed the border on 12 March 1996 and recrossed it a short while later.

3. On several occasions, UNIKOM patrols saw single tracer rounds being fired into the air on the Iraqi side of the DMZ and heard rounds being fired from small arms on either side. Such firing appeared not to be directed at anyone, and it has not been possible to establish who fired or why.

4. There were a number of overflights by F-4, F-16 and A-10 military aircraft. Such aircraft are used by the coalition forces, but the nationalities could not be confirmed. On 2 December 1995, a low-flying Blackhawk helicopter for a time followed a UNIKOM helicopter which was on a reconnaissance flight in the DMZ.

5. An incident occurred on 23 March 1996 when three masked men armed with assault rifles forced their way into a UNIKOM patrol base in the northern sector, on the Iraqi side of the DMZ. The motive appeared to be robbery, and the men retreated before soldiers of the Bangladesh battalion which had arrived to secure the base. The Iraqi liaison officer was informed of the incident, and steps were taken by him to establish random police checkpoints around the area. UNIKOM has tightened security of its patrol bases in that vicinity.

6. Oil drilling and the development of related infrastructure within the DMZ increased on both sides of the border. There was also an increase in farming and grazing activities in keeping with seasonal changes.

7. Kuwait added a number of ramps to its barbed-wire fence and sand berm along the border to facilitate observation of its border police by vehicle patrols. It also built an observation tower in the area between Safwan and Umm Qasr.

8. UNIKOM monitored the DMZ from patrol and observation bases, through ground and air patrols, and from temporary observation points in the populated areas. (A map showing UNIKOM's deployment is attached.) UNIKOM maintained liaison with the Iraqi and Kuwaiti authorities at all levels and coordinated with them in cases of unauthorized border crossing and repatriation. It also cooperated closely on such matters with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

9. UNIKOM provided the venue and support for five meetings of the Technical Subcommittee on Military and Civilian Missing Prisoners of War and Mortal Remains. The meetings were held alternately in Umm Qasr (Iraq) and Camp Khor (Kuwait) under the auspices of ICRC.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

10. As of March 1996, the overall strength of UNIKOM was 1,356, as follows:

(a) 245 military observers from Argentina (6), Austria (7), Bangladesh (10), Canada (4), China (15), Denmark (5), Fiji (7), Finland (7), France (15), Ghana (6), Greece (6), Hungary (6), India (7), Indonesia (6), Ireland (6), Italy (7), Kenya (6), Malaysia (6), Nigeria (7), Pakistan (8), Poland (6), Romania (6), Russian Federation (15), Senegal (7), Singapore (6), Sweden (6), Thailand (7), Turkey (6), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (15), Uruguay (7), United States of America (15) and Venezuela (2);

(b) An infantry battalion of 775 all ranks from Bangladesh;

(c) An engineer unit of 50 from Argentina;

(d) A logistics unit of 34 from Austria;

(e) A helicopter unit of 29 from Bangladesh;

(f) A medical unit of 12 from Germany;

(g) 211 civilian staff, of whom 72 were recruited internationally.

On 1 December 1995, Major-General Gian Giuseppe Santillo (Italy) succeeded Major-General Krishna N. S. Thapa (Nepal) as Force Commander.

11. There were a number of changes in the support elements: In October 1995, a helicopter unit from Bangladesh replaced the chartered helicopter. In December 1995, a civilian medical unit from Germany took over from the contractor. In January 1996, the Danish logistic unit was replaced by a unit from Austria. UNIKOM retained use of a chartered fixed-wing aircraft.

12. In the interest of economy and efficiency, I have approved a modest streamlining proposed by General Santillo, reducing the number of military observers by about 50. The reduction will involve staff positions at the Mission and Sector headquarters, as well as the patrol bases. One Sector headquarters will be eliminated entirely, leaving two sectors instead of three. The operational activities of UNIKOM will not be affected by the reduction; its active presence in the field will be maintained at the same level as at present.

IV. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

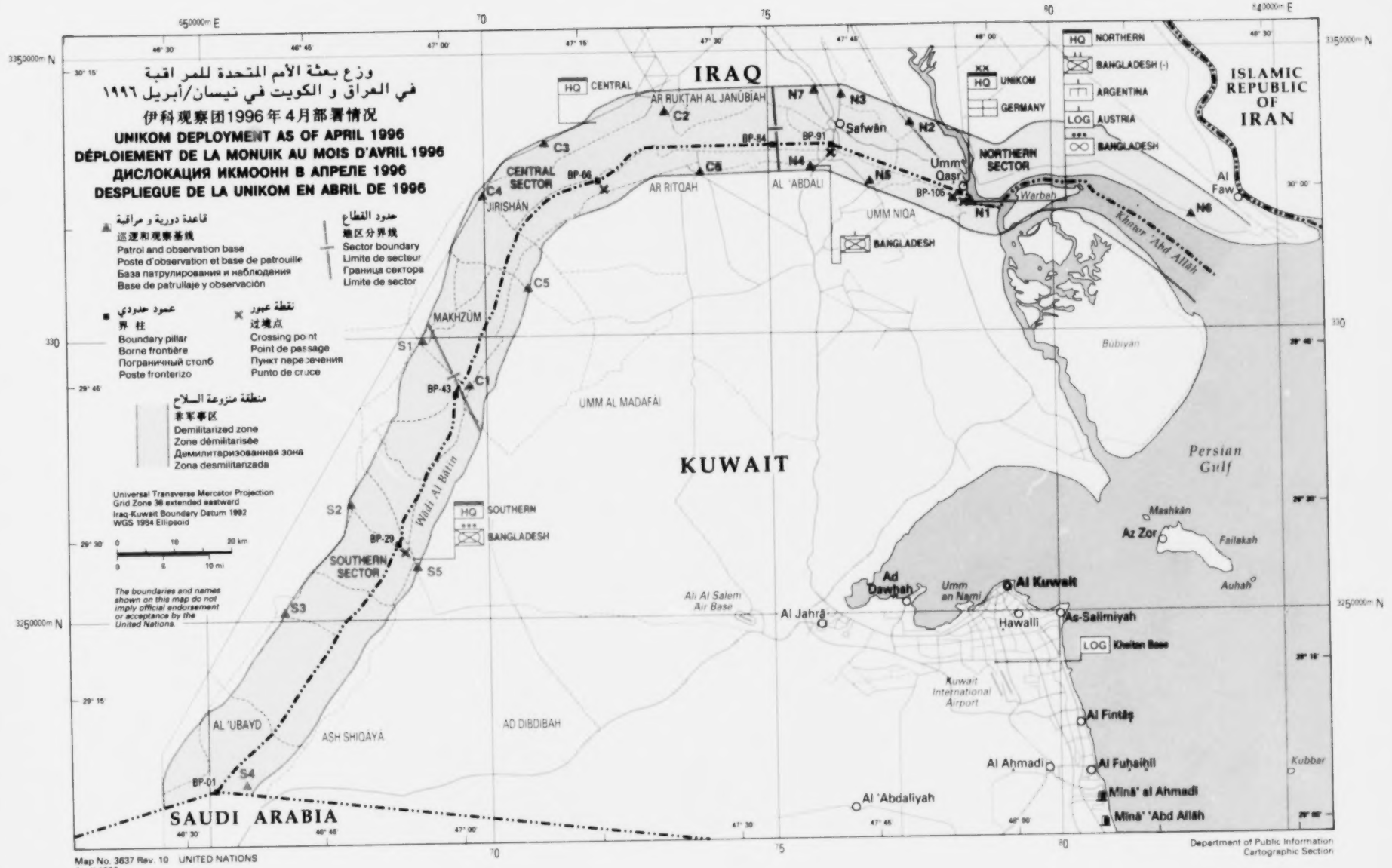
13. The General Assembly, by its resolution 49/245 of 12 July 1995, authorized me to enter into commitments for UNIKOM at a monthly rate of $1,811,900 gross for the period ending 30 June 1996. This is in addition to the two-thirds share of $3,188,100 per month to be met through voluntary contributions from the Government of Kuwait. This authorization is subject to review by the Security Council of the mandate of the Mission. Assessments on Member States have been made for the period ending 30 April 1996 and the Government of Kuwait has paid its voluntary contributions for the period ending 31 October 1995.

14. At the end of February 1996, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNIKOM for the period since the inception of the Mission through 30 April 1996 amounted to $28,822,142. The total unpaid assessed contributions for all peace-keeping operations amounted to $1.9 billion.

V. OBSERVATIONS

15. During the last six months, the Iraq-Kuwait border and the DMZ have remained generally calm. UNIKOM contributed to this situation through its patrolling and liaison activities. In carrying out its tasks, UNIKOM received the cooperation of both sides. I recommend that the Mission be maintained.

16. In conclusion, I wish to pay tribute to General Santillo and the men and women under his command for the manner in which they have discharged their responsibilities. Their discipline and bearing have been of a high order, reflecting credit on themselves, on their countries and on the United Nations. I also wish to pay special tribute to General Thapa for his outstanding leadership during his two years as Force Commander.



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